

Mississippi lawmakers cheer on Chick-fil-A

WASHINGTON (BP and local reports) — Mississippi Congressman Alan Nunnelee has initiated a letter signed by 16 other members of the U.S. House of Representatives to Chick-fil-A President Dan Cathy, saying they welcome his company's business in their district and are appreciative of the way he and his company have reacted to opposition in recent days.

Mississippi Congressman Gregg Harper's signature also appears on the letter as one of the 16 Congressmen who endorsed Nunnelee's effort.

Nunnelee and Harper are both Republicans, and both are deacons in Mississippi Baptist churches. Nunnelee is a member of Calvary Church, Tupelo, while Harper is a member Crossgates Church, Brandon. Cathy is a member of New Hope Church in Fayetteville, Ga.

"We write today to show support for the manner in which you have defended your values and reputation in the face of unfair and malicious criticism," Nunnelee writes. "We are bewildered by those who would take offense at your values and would block the expansion of your business into their communities. We welcome Chick-fil-A's investment in our districts. The example of quality, hard work, and charity demonstrated by Chick-fil-A is one that others who, when faced with opposing views, resort to hate would do well to emulate."

The tone of the letter stands in stark contrast to the reaction by some political leaders in light of Cathy's comments supporting the biblical definition of marriage. The mayors of Boston, Chicago, San Francisco, and Washington, D.C., all have made comments critical of the restaurant, implying or saying the company is not welcome in their cities.



NUNNELEE



HARPER

First Church, Crystal Springs, issues apology

By William H. Perkins Jr.
Editor

The members of First Church, Crystal Springs, apologized August 5 for a racial incident that sparked international news coverage and touched off a firestorm of criticism from commentators, activists, and average citizens.

Charles and Te'Andrea Wilson were asked to move their July 21 wedding from First Church, Crystal Springs, after a handful of members objected to a black couple being al-

lowed to marry there. Those members have not been publicly identified.

Pastor Stan Weatherford has said he was seeking to reach an accord that would satisfy all parties when he suggested the wedding be moved to a local black church. Weatherford performed the wedding at the second church location.

"We, the church, realize that the Hendersons [bride's family] and Wilsons [groom's family] should have never been asked to relocate their wedding. This wrong decision resulted in hurt and sadness for everyone. Both the pastor and those involved in the wedding

location being changed have expressed their regrets and sorrow for their actions," read a statement released by the church after the morning worship service.

"As a church, we express our apology to Te'Andrea and Charles Wilson for the hurt that was brought to them in the hours preceding their wedding and beyond. We are seeking forgiveness and reconciliation with our Lord Jesus Christ, Te'Andrea and Charles, family and friends of the Hendersons and Wilsons, our church

see APOLOGY on p. 6

ERLC's Land sets retirement date in 2013

WASHINGTON (BP and local reports) — Richard Land, who led the transformation of the Southern Baptist Convention's ethics entity during the denomination's Conservative Resurgence, has announced he will retire next year after a quarter of a century of service as its head.

Land's retirement as president of the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC) will be effective Oct. 23, 2013, he announced in a July 31 letter to the acting chairman of the entity's board of trustees. His retirement is scheduled to take place 25 years from the date he assumed the ERLC's presidency in 1988.

Land, 65, has acted as an advocate among Southern Baptists for biblical positions on such issues as the sanctity of human life, religious freedom, marriage, and race relations. His staunch efforts during his tenure also have made him an evangelical Christian voice among social conservatives in this country's escalating cultural battles.

Time Magazine named him in 2005 as one of America's 25 most influential evangelicals.

"Dr. Land has been a stalwart leader of conservative and Christian causes and has been at the forefront of protecting our liberty in America," said Mat Staver, chairman of Liberty Counsel and dean of the Liberty University Law School.

"He will certainly be missed in the role that he has played for many years by those of us who have worked closely with him and those of us who have followed his work. I have a high respect for Dr. Land and believe his legacy will continue to be felt throughout the country."

Don Wildmon, founder of



RICHARD LAND

the American Family Association in Tupelo, told Baptist Press, "We're all indebted to [Land]. I'd hate to see him go, but if he's going to stay in the wars that's good. We need him."

Texas native Land has been a popular speaker in Mississippi Baptist circles, addressing the Mississippi Baptist Pastors' Conference on several occasions and preaching in a number of Mississippi Baptist churches over the years.

Land made it clear in his letter he is retiring only from the ERLC, "not from the ministry, or from what is popularly called the 'culture war.'"

"When God called me into the ministry a half century ago, the burden He placed on my heart was for America," wrote Land, who recently began his 50th year in the gospel ministry. "That call and that burning burden are still there. I believe the 'culture war' is a titanic struggle for our nation's soul and as a minister of Christ's Gospel, I have no right to retire from that struggle."

Land chose to announce his

retirement nearly 15 months before its effective date to provide "plenty of time for an orderly transition for both the Commission and myself to the next phase of our respective future ministries," he said in his letter to Richard Piles, acting chairman of the ERLC trustees.

He described the ERLC's ministry as "critically important for both Christ's church and the nation," saying, "I pledge to do everything in my power to make the transition to new leadership as smooth and seamless as possible."

He has received numerous requests through the years regarding opportunities to serve in the public policy, media, ministry, and academic fields, Land said. "Until now, I have not felt freedom to consider such opportunities. God has now given me that freedom," wrote Land.

He said he already is doing some media and public policy consulting in Washington and looks forward to working more closely with the Richard Land Center for Cultural Engagement at Southwestern Semi-

nary in Fort Worth.

Land's hiring in 1988 came amid the ongoing effort by Southern Baptist supporters of biblical inerrancy to restore the convention to its theological roots. Conservative trustees of what was then known as the Christian Life Commission (CLC) were in the majority after nearly a decade of appointments to the entity's board by the elected presidents of the Southern Baptist Convention.

The CLC had never had a truly pro-life leader at the head of the agency since abortion had become a culture-cleaving issue in the 1960s, culminating in the U.S. Supreme Court's 1973 Roe v. Wade and Doe v. Bolton decisions legalizing the procedure for effectively any reason throughout pregnancy.

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From the editor

WILLIAM PERKINS

Chicken, and determination, by the ton

There's an old joke in the newspaper business that one should never argue with a man who buys ink by the barrel. It's been updated for our modern electronic era to the effect that one should never argue with a man who buys electricity by the megawatt. Perhaps we can now further update it with the adage, never try to ruin a Christian businessman who buys chicken by the ton (and then some).

That's what the homosexual rights lobby mistakenly tried to do over the past few weeks since Dan Cathy, head of Chick-fil-A restaurants, expressed his support for the traditional definition of marriage — that is, between a man and a woman — in an interview with the Baptist newspaper in North Carolina.

According to Fox News, in 2009 Chick-fil-A sold more than 261 million sandwiches (eight per second) through more than 1,600 stores in 39 states, using a total of 162 million pounds of chicken. They have had 44 consecutive years of sales growth (every year since its inception), and increased sales in 2010 to \$1.4 billion — a 13% increase over the previous year.

The company's success has allowed Chick-fil-A to give away millions of dollars to charitable causes and events like the former Peach Bowl in Atlanta now known as the Chick-Fil-A Bowl.

Then came the Cathy interview. All of a sudden Chick-fil-A was toxic in the national news media, which is nothing more than a pliant foot servant of the homosexual rights movement. "Chick-fil-A is anti-gay!" screamed the headlines on liberal newspapers around the country. Boycotts of the company's 1,600 stores were quickly organized to protest the "hate" message Cathy was promoting with his company's financial support of "extremist" groups like Focus on the Family and the Fellowship of Christian Athletes.

Boston Mayor Thomas Menino, a Democrat, announced that his city was such a tolerant place that he would not tolerate a Chick-fil-A restaurant. Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel, also a Democrat, likewise criticized the company for their draconian views on homosexuality and then warmly greeted Muslim strongman Louis Farrakhan, who

proposes executions for homosexuals. The San Francisco mayor... well, enough said.

Mind you, the word "gay" was not uttered by Cathy in the interview. He spoke about traditional marriage. However, his words have been twisted by agenda-driven news media and special interest groups with vested interests to the point that most people might be tempted to equate what Cathy said with Farrakhan's rantings.

However, it seems that people have finally had enough of that kind of talk aimed at fine Christian believers who wish to stand on their convictions. When FoxNews television show host Mike Huckabee called for a Chick-fil-A Appreciation Day on August 1, ordinary folks with no ax to grind jumped at the chance to do something to be heard.

Thus the largest sales day in the history of the Atlanta-based company was accomplished. People across the country stood in line for hours for the opportunity to plow down their hard earned money for something in which they could believe — and it wasn't necessarily the chicken.

People are tired of being told they are homophobic (a made-up word) and intolerant (a very real and hurtful word) when they're not. People are sick of being compared to racists and fascists when they're not. People are fed up with being looked down upon for holding to the traditional understanding of marriage.

Maybe people can't take on a federal judge or fight a presidential executive order, but they can buy chicken. Maybe there's nothing they can do when the news media attack and brutalize them, but they can buy chicken. Maybe their work hours and family demands prevent them from participating in a heterosexual "kiss-in," but they can buy chicken. Maybe people feel otherwise helpless to do anything, but they can buy chicken.

Homosexual rights groups, and especially the politicians who support them, should take note. On August 1, there was an overwhelming turnout of people determined to make a statement about traditional values and their right to support them.

That can happen on any given election day, too.

Don't blink!

Amidst all the technology changes happening in 2012 — from Windows 8 to the new iPhone this fall — the biggest one is happening more discreetly, without you even knowing it. It will change the way we interact with the Internet and, thus, the whole world. Your broadband connection is getting even faster. Ridiculously fast.

The Internet started out at 56 kilobits per second. In other words, it took time just to push a small bit of data over the wire. The Internet was not built for movies, music, or even eBooks. It was meant for simple, small things. Now, in 2012, our Internet service providers are pushing forward our connections at an unprecedented rate.

In June, Verizon started rolling out its new top-tier service, FiOS Quantum. This connection brings 300 megabits per second download speeds to the common household. (By comparison, 300 megabits per second is 307,200 kilobits.) In July, Comcast began offering the same level of service with their Xfinity Platinum Internet offering.

Do you remember when you first heard that people were storing full length movies on their hard drives? Do you remember how huge the file sizes for HD movies were, and how it seemed like it would take up crazy amounts of space to try and save one of them, let alone the time it would take to download one?

A 5GB HD movie, at these new speeds, can be downloaded in little more than two minutes.

Then in July, as we tried to come to grips with what people might be able to do with 300 megabits per second, Google trumped everyone. Google announced they are becoming an internet and cable provider. Starting in Kansas City, Kan., and Kansas City, Mo., Google will be providing one gigabit per second internet. (One gigabit is 1,024 megabits.)

That HD movie download time that seemed so impressive in the last paragraph? Try downloading it in five seconds — for only \$70 a month.

In my career, I've worked with really large files. I used to be a video editor, and working with all the source files for a huge HD project; I may have been looking at 100 GB of data or so. Downloading that at what will soon be the new normal would have taken less than two minutes. This flow of data is inconceivable.

There may be no real practical application



Guest opinion
with Aaron Linne

of this event that can be understood today. Yes, our videos will be faster, our connections will be stronger, and the lag time in video games will be non-existent. That's all the stuff that we know today, but this change will open up the dreams of tomorrow.

Just like churches 10 years ago would never have been able to dream of satellite churches that stream a pastor's sermon live like we can do today, our imaginations have yet to catch up with what this may mean. Instead of one HD stream being sent out of your campus, could you have dozens? Hundreds? Is this pipe big enough to stream not video, but a hologram?

What if, instead of just streaming the pastor across town, you were streaming the whole congregation? You could turn your head to the right, change a filter in your glasses, and be talking to someone a state away like they were right there.

Once this kind of free-flowing, rushing river of data heads across the world, there could be no stopping a great and beautiful message of grace, hope, and love. There is no telling what the world will look like just a few short months from now, as our Internet providers compete to up the ante on what data can do.

There will be no telling what new collaborations, new learnings, new dangers, and new worlds we will be facing in two years. At the 2016 Olympics, just four years after the most immersive digital experience that's ever been offered through the 2012 Olympics, how different our world will be — all because of data.

Thank you, July 2012, for setting up our future.

Linne is executive producer of digital marketing for the B&H Publishing Group of LifeWay Christian Resources of the Southern Baptist Convention in Nashville. Here commentary appears courtesy of Baptist Press.

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U.S. NEWS

Contraceptive mandate in effect as of Aug. 1

WASHINGTON (BP) — The Obama administration's much-criticized abortion/contraceptive mandate went into effect Aug. 1, forcing businesses and religious organizations to carry insurance plans covering contraceptives that can cause chemical abortions, at no cost to the employee.

It is not known how many businesses and religious organizations are impacted, and in fact, it is possible that most of them are not — yet. That's because businesses and religious organizations had the option of "grandfathering" the plans they had as of March 23, 2010, the date the health care law was signed, as long as no major changes had been made since then.

That means that if their plan did not include contraceptives then, it does not have to do so now, as long as the grandfathered requirements are met.

Religious organizations not eligible for "grandfathered" status could get a one-year extension until Aug. 1, 2013, but only if their insurance plans, as of Feb. 10 of this year, had not provided any contraceptive coverage due to religious objections.

Religious liberty organizations say the mandate and its exemptions and loopholes have multiple problems. Their biggest objection is, for the first time, the federal government is requiring businesses and religious organizations to cover contraceptives and abortion-causing drugs, something to which they might have strong moral objections.

Catholic doctrine opposes all forms of contraceptives, and although Protestants generally don't oppose all types of contraceptives, they mostly oppose abortion on demand. The mandate rule, written by the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), includes in its definition of "contraceptives" such products as morning-after pills and emergency contraceptives. For instance, Plan B and Ella can work after fertilization and cause a chemical abortion. Ella even can work after implantation.

Opponents of the mandate also object to its narrow religious liberty exemption. Although churches are exempt from the mandate, religious organizations such as Christian schools and universities, faith-based hospitals and certain ministries are not.

Opponents of the mandate say there are other problems:

■ HHS did not issue its proposed rules on the mandate until Aug. 1, 2011, well after the grandfather date of March 23, 2010. This means that business owners

and religious organizations who object to contraceptives and/or abortion may have made changes to their plans after March 23, 2010, not realizing what their action would lead to, which is being held to the HHS mandate and forced to cover chemical abortions and contraceptives.

"People weren't thinking of the significance [the changes] would have here," attorney Patrick D. Purtill, of the Gammon & Grange law firm, said on a July 31 conference call sponsored by the Institutional Religious Freedom Alliance.

■ The rule for the one-year extension does not acknowledge that some religious organizations might oppose covering some, but not all, contraceptives. Many Protestant organizations fit this definition. Yet to be eligible for the one-year extension, a religious organization must have not covered any contraceptives.

Wheaton College, an evangelical school in Illinois, was impacted by the Aug. 1 deadline because it did not meet the requirements to be grandfathered in or to get a one-year extension. It filed suit against the government in July, and on Aug. 1, asked a federal judge to issue an injunction in its favor.

"Remember August 1, 2012. Today begins a violation of American conscience like we have never seen before in our country, and Wheaton College personifies it," Kyle Duncan, general counsel for the Becket Fund for Religious Liberty, said in a statement. Becket Fund is representing Wheaton.

"Everyone knows Wheaton is a school that lives out its faith but today our government is telling Wheaton it is not 'religious enough' to have a conscience, and so can be forced to participate in abortions or face heavy fines. Wheaton's only recourse is to ask the federal courts for emergency relief."

Unless a court steps in, Wheaton will be forced to follow the mandate in late October, when its new insurance year begins. (Even with the Aug. 1 deadline, the mandate doesn't kick in until a company's or organization's new "insurance year" begins, which varies from employer to employer.)

Other colleges and universities, though, have met the grandfather requirement. One of them is Union University in Jackson, Tenn., which says the mandate does not apply to it. "Should we, however, ever lose our grandfathered status, the mandate would apply to us," the university said in a statement.



FRED LUTER

Luter welcomes inclusion of African Americans from cooperating churches

RIDGECREST, N.C. (BP) — Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) President Fred Luter exhorted African American believers to heighten their denominational involvement while also seeking spiritual renewal as he addressed the Black Church Leadership and Family Conference at the LifeWay Ridgecrest Conference Center in North Carolina.

"They [many SBC leaders] fully expect me to nominate more African Americans to serve on SBC boards and committees," Luter said in voicing his commitment to Southern Baptist diversity.

"Brothers and sisters, I'm excited about that, but let me be clear," he said. "You and your churches must be involved in the Cooperative Program and your local associations for me to do that. It's the way the SBC operates."

Luter, pastor of New Orleans' Franklin Avenue Church, told the 1,200 attendees at the conference, also known as Black Church Week, they must first be fully renewed by God before they can expect to be fully utilized by God.

"There are things the Lord requires of you and expects of you if you say 'Here am I, Lord; send me,'" said Luter, who preached twice during the July 23-27 gathering at the North Carolina conference center.

"There's not a day that goes by when we are not sifted and tried by our tormenter," Luter said. "None of us are exempt from attacks of the enemy. You can be single, saved, and satisfied. You can be a widowed and wonderful. You can be an upstanding usher or a devoted deacon. No one is exempt. There is no education

or vocation which exempts you. The enemy will do all he can to attack the minds of the sons and daughters of God."

"If you are going to be victorious, faithful to God, and go where God sends you, you must have a renewed mind," Luter said, drawing from Philipians 2 to describe how a renewed mind prepares a believer for a life of victory and obedience.

■ A renewed mind should help you think about your Christ (Phil. 2:5). "In other words, when I think about the goodness of Jesus and all He did for me, my soul shouts," Luter said.

■ A renewed mind should help you think about your choices (Phil. 2:7). "Jesus didn't allow His heavenly position and reputation to affect His earthly responsibilities," Luter said. "If you want God to send you, you need to have your decisions and choices pleasing to your heavenly Father."

■ A renewed mind should help you think about the cross (Phil. 2:8). "Every time we take the Lord's Supper at Franklin Avenue, it is an opportunity to turn our attention and remind us about the cross and the anguish He went through for us," Luter said.

Among the highlights of the week were 40 professions of faith made during the Centrifuge camp held concurrently for children and youth.

Black Church Week has been held for nearly 20 years and is the foremost opportunity for leaders and laypeople from predominantly African American congregations to join together for fellowship, study, and worship.

Individuals from 27 states attended the conference with

breakout training sessions led by nearly 70 leaders from LifeWay Christian Resources, Southern Baptist churches, the International and North American mission boards, state conventions, and SBC seminaries.

Jeffrey Curtis, LifeWay's program director for the week, said the annual gathering serves as a vital connection and often a starting point between African American congregations and the SBC.

"Black Church Week is such an important event because it helps create an awareness of who LifeWay is and the many biblical solutions and services we have for urban and black congregations," he said. "Also, the week creates a better understanding of who Southern Baptists are and the scope of the Southern Baptist Convention."

Each year approximately half of the attendees are first-timers, Curtis said.

"We hear it repeatedly each year that they weren't aware there are African Americans serving with the International Mission Board. They didn't know the work of NAMB or SBC disaster relief. They didn't know about the six SBC seminaries and how the Cooperative Program works [for supporting national and international missions and ministries]," Curtis said. "Awareness is huge, not just for LifeWay but for the SBC."

North American Mission Board President Kevin Ezell greeted the attendees via video and expressed his excitement at the increase in ethnic church plants. More than half of the SBC churches planted in North America last year were ethnic congregations, he said.

Just by reading the title of this article in question form some of you may respond at least mentally to say, "Well, yes! Every church is needed." But if a church is not fulfilling the mission of Christ and meeting the needs of people, is it really needed? I remember as a kid going into the old country store near our home and as I recall they had a large, kerosene dispenser inside the store. Back then people needed kerosene. Most of them used the kerosene for lamps and lanterns. Even after they got electricity they wanted to keep their lamps ready for those days, nights, or hours when the new fangled power company was knocked out by a storm or for some other reason. The electricity was not trustworthy and besides the lamps worked pretty well.

There were other uses for kerosene such as burning a pile of l-ush or some folks would clean off a wound with it. I had a fellow in my church who said that in the spring he ate so many turnip greens that he had to tie a kerosene rag around his ankles to keep the cutworms off. To truly understand that concept, you must have some serious roots in rural Mississippi life. There may be stores somewhere in Mississippi that still have a kerosene pump, but I have not seen one in years. Kerosene is probably more highly refined, bottled in little containers, and sold at Wal-Mart as lamp oil. Kerosene is gone, not needed any more, and most of the country stores are gone too.

So what about your church? There was a time that it may have given great light in your community, in your home, and in your heart. I wonder if it is needed like it once was. Let me clarify that I am not talking about the church that Jesus established when He said to Peter, "And I say also unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matt. 16:18). I know that the church is of God, and I know that Jesus established the church to have an eternal reign. I also know that individual



Is Your Church Needed?

congregations may lose their love, life, vibrancy, purpose for being, and simply be sitting there like an old, unneeded kerosene dispenser wondering why nobody ever comes by anymore. I can tell you that every church is needed to reach our nation and our world for Jesus.

Based on the 2010 Census, the U.S. Population Projection Clock shows that we are now a nation of over 314 million people. A little over 30 years ago we were a land of a little over 200 million people. Now with one hundred million more, many of our churches have gone out of business. Add to that the fact that the global population is expected to reach over seven billion by 2015. We need churches, but not just buildings that sit on the side of the road that were once light dispensers. We need them alive and well now and engaged with the Lord and the world in which we live. I am sure that there are a lot of other things that need to be in a church if it is going to fulfill its mission but three things are absolutely necessary.

One, it must be a congregation of folks pointed toward the purpose of reaching a world for Christ. They stay clearly focused and pointed in the right direction of reaching a world for Christ.

If we are not going to be involved in the redemptive work of Jesus, why would God even bother to leave us here after we have trusted Him and were saved by His grace? We are here for the same reason saved folks were here before we accepted Christ. The church must be pointed at reaching a world that is lost and in need of a Savior. What happens sometimes is that our churches get pointed the wrong way, and they spend a great deal more time looking inward instead of outward. Time is spent analyzing the programs they have, the games they play, and occasionally complaining because things are not running as smoothly as they need to be. They do get pointed the wrong way and when they do in time they find that they are there for no useful purpose. They become kerosene dispensers in a spiritually dark world.

The second element that is essential for a church if it is going to have a legitimate purpose is it must have a passion for Jesus. The Scripture says in the Book of Acts that the noteworthy thing in the lives of the early disciples was that people recognized that they had been with Jesus. It is good to be passionate about life and whatever it is in life that you enjoy. But there is one supreme passion

above all others that must dominate our churches and that is Jesus. Nothing must supersede that passion. For instance, you may have known people or maybe it is you that are intensely passionate about some particular ministry or area of work. Maybe it is music or some style of music or maybe they became concerned with some slant on their spiritual life, growth, and walk with the Lord. It becomes more significant than their love for and passion about Jesus Himself. At that point, even though they may not recognize it, a distortion begins to take place. All of those things must be rooted, grounded, and founded in a personal passion for the person who makes it all possible - the living Lord Jesus.

A third feature that seems to dominate churches that are alive, well, healthy, and helpful is they are always poised to serve. This always seems to be missing when the church has lost its light and reason for being. A healthy church meets needs regardless of whether it is an offering to be taken like the early church to help the folks in Jerusalem, a cup of cold water offered in His name, or picking a fellow up and putting him on a beast of burden and carrying him to an inn like the Good Samaritan. If you go to church regularly, listen to the Sunday School lesson, hear the sermon, get in your car, go have Sunday lunch, and never find a contact for your hands to touch some other life to lift them, to help them, to guide them; and your heart never reaches out to another soul; and your gifts are never extended to bless another life to the degree that you want to reach out, serve others, and touch people in Jesus' name; to that degree your church is needed or not needed. Either we will find ways to penetrate the darkness around us and provide God's light or we will just become a relic of something that used to be and used to make a difference.

The author can be contacted at jfutral@mbcb.org.

College News

► **William Carey University** will hold orientation for all new students, including both freshmen and transfer students, on August 24 in Clinton Gymnasium on the Hattiesburg campus. Beginning at 8 a.m., residential students will have an opportunity to

move into their assigned dormitories and new students will be able to complete registration processes with administrative offices. Orientation registration begins at 10:30 a.m. and will continue until noon. Orientation will begin at noon in the gymnasium and continue

until 4 p.m. for new students. A parent question-and-answer and orientation session will be held from noon until 1 p.m. in the Glass Room of Thomas Business Building. For more information, contact Emily Sheckels at (601) 318-6444.

► **William Carey University** will hold the annual Scholarship Dinner featuring keynote speaker Gov. Phil Bryant at Southern Oaks House and Gardens on August 21. The evening will consist of a VIP reception and a dinner with musical entertainment and an address

by Gov. Bryant. The reception begins at 6 p.m. and the dinner at 7 p.m. A special scholarship will be established in honor of Gov. Bryant. For more information and ticket prices you may contact Lynne Houston at (601) 318-6231 or lhoustan@wmc Carey.edu.

Submission Guidelines

The Baptist Record is pleased to publish news and photographs of special events that take place in cooperating churches of the Mississippi Baptist Convention.

News submitted for publication in The Baptist Record must be either (a) typewritten, (b) neatly printed on 8 1/2 by 11-inch paper, or (c) neatly printed on standardized forms provided by the newspaper. All articles must be received in writing; no articles will be accepted over the telephone.

News may be submitted electronically to the address below, and must be contained in the message segment of an e-mail form. Due to increasing virus threats, no text attachments will be accepted. Photograph attachments are permissible.

Please make articles concise. Include the who, what, when, where details of the story, along with a contact person's address and telephone number.

Photographs may be color or black and white. Instant photos and digital printouts are

not reproducible. Digital photos may be used if submitted as a JPEG file via either e-mail, CD or DVD. Photos must be clear, sharp, and well-lighted. Cell phone photographs and other low resolution items are generally not publishable. Photographs can not be returned. Please do not attach photos with tape or staples.

All news items are subject to editing, and all photographs are subject to cropping. Photographs must depict people. No landscape, building, or object-only photographs will be printed. News items and/or photographs can be published one time only. News items and/or photographs depicting benefits and activities for secular or outside organizations will not be published. Deadline for submitting news is one week prior to requested publication date.

Articles that are not date-sensitive will be published on a space-available basis.

Submit news and photographs to The Baptist Record, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. FAX: (601) 292-3330. E-mail: baptistrecord@mbcb.org.

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KWM KC FKLADWXNVCWVV.

KVUKUA PKSW:VKID-WWC

Clue: V=S

Have fun with cryptography and exercise your Bible knowledge. A King James Version Bible verse has been encoded by letter substitution. The same letter is substituted throughout the puzzle. Solve by trial and error. Answer to last week's puzzle: Psalms Forty-Seven: One

By Charles Marx, 1932-2004, © 2005

What I tell you in the darkness, speak in the light; and what you hear whispered in your ear, proclaim upon the

HOUSE TOPS.

Matthew 10:27 NAS

August 9, 2012

HouseTops is a Baptist Record supplement produced by the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board's Communication Services.




2012 Auditions for the 2013 Mississippi Baptist All-State Youth Choir and Orchestra

Open to 9th-12th graders involved in the music
ministry of Mississippi Southern Baptist Churches
REGISTER 2 WEEKS PRIOR TO THE AUDITION

<p>Saturday—September 15, 2012 10:30 a.m.- 1:30 p.m. William Carey University, Hattiesburg, MS</p> <p>Sunday—September 16, 2012 2:00 p.m.- 4:00 p.m. Grace Memorial Baptist Church, Gulfport, MS</p> <p>Thursday—September 20, 2012 4:00 p.m.- 7:00 p.m. First Baptist Church, Summit, MS</p> <p>Thursday—September 27, 2012 4:00 p.m.- 8:00 p.m. Fairview Baptist Church, Columbus, MS</p>	<p>Sunday—September 30, 2012 2:00 p.m.- 4:00 p.m. North Oxford Baptist Church, Oxford, MS</p> <p>Thursday—October 4, 2012 4:00 p.m.- 7:00 p.m. First Baptist Church, Meridian, MS</p> <p>Saturday—October 6, 2012 1:00 p.m.- 4:00 p.m. Baptist Building, Jackson, MS</p> <p>Sunday—October 7, 2012 2:00 p.m.- 5:00 p.m. Baptist Building, Jackson, MS</p>
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Sponsored by the Church Music Department,
Mississippi Baptist Convention Board, Jackson, Miss.
For More Information: 1-800-748-1651, ext. 266, palford@mbcb.org or scluttrell@mbcb.org
For more registration information visit the MBCB Web site:
<http://www.mbcb.org/download/cm/2012%20MBASYCO.pdf>



Annual Missions Celebration and Missions Leadership Training

August 17-18, 2012 Garaywa Camp & Conference Center

Schedule:

Friday

- | | |
|-----------|--------------------------------|
| 5:00 p.m. | Dinner |
| 6:15 p.m. | Conferences, Session 1 |
| 7:30 p.m. | Worship Celebration Fellowship |

Saturday

- | | |
|------------|------------------------|
| 7:15 a.m. | Breakfast |
| 8:15 a.m. | Missions Moment |
| 9:00 a.m. | Conferences, Session 2 |
| 10:15 a.m. | Conferences, Session 3 |
| 11:30 a.m. | Conferences, Session 4 |
| 12:30 p.m. | Lunch & Dismiss |

Guest Speakers include:

Cynthia Martin
Mary Doyle
Rick Morton

Visit www.mbcb.org/wmu <<http://www.mbcb.org/wmu>> then click on Events (left menu, under At A Glance); select event by date, then click on downloadable attachments. Cabins are the only housing available now on the Garaywa campus.



WorldCrafts is a ministry of WMU that provides artisans from all over the world an opportunity to provide food, clothing, housing, education, and medical care for their families. For more information on WorldCrafts or for help planning your event, please contact **Tammy Anderson** in the Mississippi WMU office (800-748-1651, ext. 323, or tanderson@mbcb.org).

You can shop for WorldCraft items online at
www.worldcrafts.org



Transformational Sunday School Training

August 11, 18, 25; September 8, 15, 22

Make your plans now to attend Sunday School training designed with the needs of your church in mind. Planning teams work with local church and association leaders in each region of the state to prayerfully determine the needs of your church. Each conference is customized with those needs in mind. Specific conferences will be announced as needs are discovered.

2012 JANUARY BIBLE STUDY PREVIEW CLINICS

THE GREATEST WEEK IN HISTORY: LUKE'S ACCOUNT OF THE PASSION WEEK

Led by: Rob Futral, Pastor
Broadmoor Baptist Church, Madison, Miss.

What an honor to have our own Rob Futral, author of the Learner Guide for this study, leading both clinics.



Dr. Rob Futral, Pastor
Broadmoor Baptist Church
Madison, Miss.



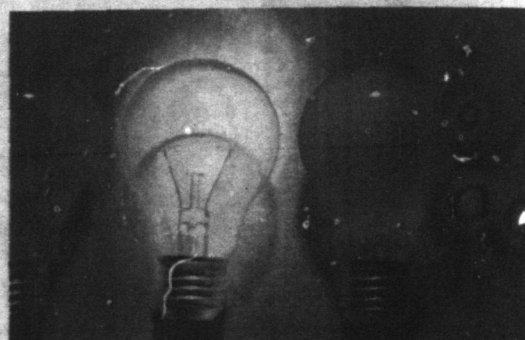
Friendship Baptist Church, Grenada, Miss.
Tuesday, September 18, 2012

Main Street Baptist Church, Hattiesburg, Miss.
Thursday, September 20, 2012

9:00 a.m. - noon

Registration begins at 8:30 a.m.

No cost but please preregister. Books will not be provided.



2012 Pastors Workshop

— Creating a Culture of Evangelism —

Pearl River Baptist Association
McNeill

Monday, August 20, 2012

9:00 a.m. - noon

• Registration is requested so that materials can be prepared.

• For more information, or to register, call 601.292.3305, or 800.748.1651, ext. 305, cwtaylor@mbcb.org.

Sponsored by the Pastor/Leadership Development Department, Mississippi Baptist Convention Board

2012 REGIONAL SENIOR RALLIES

\$1 at the door

Dates for Rallies:

NORTHERN RALLY:

Tuesday, August 28

Neshoba Association Family Center

Choir: The Singing Saints, FBC, Newton

Preacher: Sonny Atkins, Mendenhall

Schedule:

8:30 a.m. - Registration/Refreshments

9:00 a.m. - Choir & Preacher

10:30 a.m. - Break-out Sessions

11:30 a.m. - Adjourn

For Information:

Neshoba Baptist 601-656-1820,

neshobaabaptist@yahoo.com

SOUTHERN RALLY:

Thursday, August 30

Pearl River Association

(McNeill, Close to Picayune)

Choir: First Baptist Church, McComb

Preachers: Jerry Mixon, Madison

Schedule:

8:30 a.m. - Registration/Refreshments

9:00 a.m. - Choir & Preacher

10:30 a.m. - Break-out Sessions

11:30 a.m. - Adjourn

For Information:

Pearl River Association, 601-798-2372

prva@pearlrivermbcb.org

Mother/Daughter Overnight at Garaywa

1st-6th grade girls and their moms will spend quiet time together, worship & praise, meet missionaries, make crafts and more! Join the fun and fellowship this fall.

October 5-6 & October 12-13

All overnights begin at 5 p.m. on Friday and end by 2:00 p.m. on Saturday.

Cost: \$50 per person

Visit: www.garaywa.org under EVENTS, Mother/Daughter Overnight, for Registration Forms.

MUSIC LEADERSHIP TRAINING SCHOOL

August begins the fifth of eight courses offered at seven locations in Mississippi sponsored by the Church Music Department of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board, in cooperation with the Providence Learning Center of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. This course is entitled "Song and Hymns for Worship."

First Baptist Church, Starkville - Aug. 11 and 25

(9:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m. with lunch break)

Tom Jenkins, Teacher, (C) 662-323-5633

Northcrest Baptist Church, Meridian - beginning August 13

(6:30-8:30 p.m.)

Buddy McElroy, Teacher, (cell) 601-938-8668, (H) 601-679-1887

Huntsboro Baptist Church - beginning August 14

(6:30-8:30 p.m.)

Louis White, Gullport, Teacher, (C) 228-896-3796

Easthaven Baptist Church, Brookhaven - Aug. 18 and 25

(9:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m. with lunch break)

Mark Hamilton, Teacher, (cell) 601-835-6607

Broadmoor Baptist Church, Madison - beginning August 20

(6:00-8:00 p.m.)

Jimmy McCaleb, Teacher, (H) 601-924-1233

First Baptist Church, Cleveland - beginning August 21

(6:30-8:30 p.m.)

Alan Berry, Teacher, (C) 662-843-2701

First Baptist Church, Booneville - beginning August 21

(6:30-8:30 p.m.)

LuAnne Ford, Teacher, (C) 662-728-6272

Please call the teachers for more information, or contact Slater Murphy

(smurphy@mbcb.org) 315 Mississippi St., Jackson, Miss., (292-3276 or 1-800-748-1651, ext. 276).

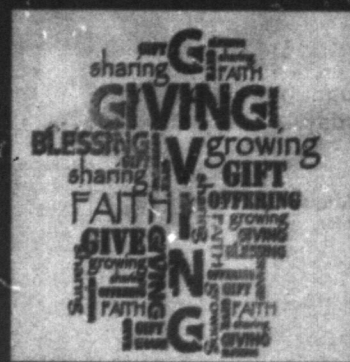
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unexpected

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- Christian Women's/Men's Job Corps
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- Central Hills campgrounds
- Community Mission Projects
- Camp Garaywa
- Port Ministries
- Cross Cultural Evangelism
- Disaster Relief
- Language/Deaf Ministry
- Mission Volunteers

\$2 MILLION GOAL



One-Day Stewardship Revival

The one activity with the most potential for creating a culture of generosity in your congregation is a Stewardship Workshop.

For more information contact the Stewardship Department of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board, at 601.292.3347.

BNF Retreat 2012: October 5-6 at Garaywa in Clinton

October 6, 2012
Featured guest speaker:
Mary Callahan

For more information
contact:

Denise Windom
601-684-3222

denisewindom@bellsouth.net



Designed for:

- Children (Grade 4-6)
- Student Drillers (Grades 7-12)
- Adults who teach Children's Bible Drill
- Adults who teach Student Bible Drill
- High School Speakers (Grades 10-12)

Fall Bible Drill Retreat

September 21-22, 2012 • Garaywa Camp and Conference Center

Pray this day for...

August 10 – August 23, 2012

Rejoice in the Lord...but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your request be made known to God.

-Philippians 4:4-6

Pray for: **Richard* and Wanda Clark**, IMB missionaries ministering to European Peoples in Romania through strategy coordination.

Pray for: **David* and Gloria* Glaze**, missionaries ministering to Deaf Peoples in the United States through media consultation and promotion.

Pray for: **Guy* and Cindy* Demars**, IMB missionaries ministering to Sub-Saharan African Peoples in Senegal through church and home outreach and evangelism and hospital coordination.

Pray for: **John* and Sonia* Grady**, IMB missionaries ministering to American Peoples in the U.S. through evangelism and church and home outreach.

Pray for: **Thomas* and Kerri Dewett**, IMB missionaries ministering to American Peoples in the Dominican Republic through evangelism, church and home outreach.

Pray for: **Clarence Frank and Phoebe* Hartson**, IMB missionaries ministering to American Peoples in Honduras through church planting, church and home outreach and evangelism.

Pray for: **Alvin and Mary* Doyle**, IMB missionaries ministering to European Peoples in Hungary through member care.

Pray for: **Brian* and Felicia* Henderson**, IMB missionaries ministering to American Peoples in Peru through regional office support, church and home outreach and evangelism.

Pray for: **Aaron* and Tiffany Epps**, IMB missionaries ministering to American Peoples in Brazil through church and home outreach and evangelism.

Pray for: **Earl* and Ramona Hewitt**, missionaries ministering to Sub-Saharan African Peoples in the U.S. through medicine, church and home outreach and evangelism.

Pray for: **Donald* and Donna* Brown**, IMB missionaries ministering to European Peoples in Romania through church planting, church and home outreach and evangelism.

Pray for: **David and Pamela* Carlton**, IMB missionaries ministering to Sub-Saharan African Peoples in South Africa through theological education, church and home outreach and evangelism.

Pray for a team of six from **FBC, Florence**, traveling to Ukraine to minister through sports ministry. August 17-26.

Pray for: **Robert* and Margaret Fortenberry**, IMB missionaries ministering to Sub-Saharan African Peoples in Botswana through church and home outreach and evangelism.

*These International Mission Board missionaries claim Mississippi as their home state. The IMB missionaries listed in the HouseTops prayer calendar are currently active in 2-4 year terms or in career service.

Professional
Certification
and Office
Skillshops
for Ministry Assistants

For questions or to register,
contact Cathy Taylor
at 662-761-1651, ext. 305,
or 252-3305 or e-mail:
cwtaylor@mbcb.org

10/1/04
MISS MAGGIE M.
Parents: C & A
Restricted

10/2/01
MISS SHELBY COX
Parents: Jeremy & Kimberly
Restricted

10/3/97
MISS KARISSA YEAGER
Parents: Tommy & Jennifer
Restricted

10/04/01
MISS MICAH WORTHY
Parents: Cherlie & Shannon
European Peoples

10/8/97
MISS CATHERINE HODGINS
Parents: Ray & Cindy
Deaf Peoples Affinity Group

10/10/94
MR. LUKE LITTLE
Parents: Bob & Amy
West Africa

10/17/00
MISS KAYLEE
Parents: D & D
Restricted

10/24/2011
Miss Charlotte (Charlie) Marie Adair
Parents: James and Mary
Margaret Adair
Sub-Saharan African
Peoples

10/25/10
Mr. J.
Parents: C & L
Restricted

10/26/06
MISS ADDISON
Parents: James & Tracy
Restricted

Encourage an MK with a card!

FOR SECURITY, cards will be forwarded. Please send all to:
Child's name, Parent's name, MBCB WMU MK Birthdays, PO
Box 530, Jackson MS 39205.

PLEASE NOTE: Church members may send a package of
cards together; cards do not have to be sent individually to the
WMU. Individual cards do not need postage stamps when sent
as a package to MS WMU.

Please include your return address on each card envelope.
MKs and their parents may wish to send you an
update or note of appreciation.



HOUSE TOPS

"Make up your mind" is the command when one must decide important matters. For example, in I Kings 18:21 (NIV) the Bible says, "... How long will you waver between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow him; but if Baal is God follow him. But the people said nothing." Did you notice that the people refused to make up their minds?

Several events/issues are calling for Christians and the church to make decisions. Will we decide or will we waver? Times are turbulent but refusing to get involved and battle for our beliefs will result in greater turbulence. Are we going to roll up our sleeves and get involved in this cultural war or are we going to sit idly by pretending it will go away? Are we going to forsake prophetic truth for political correctness? Will we speak for what is right or will we cower in silence before a hostile media? Will we confront with "Thus saith the Lord" or will we capitulate to a belief that nothing

Make Up Your Mind

is absolutely right and nothing is absolutely wrong?

Issue number one—we must choose a President on Nov 6, 2012. You cannot sit this one out. I have heard some say they will not vote for our current President and at the same time say they will not vote for a Mormon. Fellow Baptists, we are voting for a President and not a preacher to come fill our pulpits. And to say you will not vote is disrespecting everyone who has fought and died here at home or on foreign soil to protect you and to give you the freedom to choose. I find that offensive.

Can you believe that some of

your Christian friends are not even registered to vote? Their excuse is that they do not want to serve on a jury, as jurors are selected from registered voters. If

for this reason you are not registered to vote then you need to know you are one selfish individual. You are putting your comfort over the need to help give direction to this great country. So when your comfortable lifestyle falls apart, don't blame the President or the government. Look in the mirror and you will find the culprit because you did it by not voting. Register and vote!

Issue number two—as Christians we must grow a backbone and take a stand on Biblical truths. Why are we silent on issues like pro-life, freedom of

speech and religious liberty? We need more men like Dan Cathy of Chick-fil-A who are willing to fill our pulpits, stand in legislative chambers and who stand for biblical truths at home and in the market place.

Our lifestyles and our silence on issues have blurred the distinction between right and wrong. One young lady was asked if she ate at Chick-fil-A on August 1st. She replied, "I cannot in good conscience patronize an establishment that knowingly donates a portion of its profits to groups that encourage homosexuals to feel bad about themselves." She said, "Correct me if I'm wrong, but isn't that an organized form of bullying? I fully support freedom of speech, but this is about more than freedom of speech."

If Elijah were living today he might say, "Wake up America, wake up Baptists because you are about to lose your right to freedom of speech."

Issue number three—we must continue to fight the sin of racial prejudice. I John 4: 20 (NIV) says, "If anyone says, 'I love God,' yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not

love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen." Even Simon Peter was prejudiced against the Gentiles but God set him straight in Acts 10. The scriptures are not subtle when it comes to demanding that Christians are to love others regardless of their differences in belief, practice and color. Jesus once said that others would know that we are his disciples by our love for one another.

Years ago the Titanic, that unsinkable ship, sailed through icebergs filled waters with a confident crew believing they were invincible. Do we not as Southern Baptists and Mississippi Baptists have the same attitude as those on the Titanic? We believe we are invincible and continue on full steam ahead ignoring the icebergs of racial prejudice, homosexuality, murdering of the unborn, corrupt government, along with the persecution and slander of those who voice their Christian beliefs. Where are the deck hands who stand on the bow of the ship crying, "Danger Ahead, Danger Ahead!"?

Porter serves as executive director-treasurer for the Mississippi Baptist Christian Action Commission. He can be contacted at 601-292-3332 or jporter@christianaction.com.



with Jimmy Porter

Need a light?

Jesus said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness but will have the light of life." (John 8:12)

Simply share the following prayer with God in your own words:

1. Lord, I admit that I need you. (I have sinned.)
2. I want forgiveness for my sins and freedom from eternal death. (I repent.)
3. I believe Jesus died and rose from the grave to forgive my sins and to restore my relationship with you. (I believe in Jesus.)
4. By faith, I invite Jesus Christ into my life. From this time on, I want to live in a loving relationship with Him. (I receive Christ as my Savior and Lord.)

"But as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in his name." (John 1:12)

If you make a decision for Christ today, contact a local Southern Baptist church for spiritual guidance.

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Revivals & Homecomings

► **Magoo's Creek, Walthall County:** Homecoming, Aug. 12, 11 a.m., followed by fellowship meal; Farris Smith, speaker; the Revelation Quartet and other guests, music; Wayne Hall, interim pastor.

► **Calvary Church, Canton:** Revival, Aug. 12-15; Sun., 10:30 a.m. and 6 p.m.; Mon.-Wed., 7 p.m., followed by fellowship; Eddie Hamilton, speaker; Scott Jones, music; Tom Rayborn, pastor.

► **Hebron Church, Yazoo County:** Homecoming, Aug. 12, 11 a.m., followed by dinner on the ground; Gowan Ellis, interim pastor; Kenny Martin, music.

► **Newhebron Church, Newhebron:** Revival, Aug. 12-17; Sun., 8:30, 11 a.m. and 6 p.m.; Mon.-Fri., 7 p.m.; Darel Daniels, speaker; Monty Bounds, music.

► **Concord Church, Choctaw County:** 175th anniversary, Aug. 12, 10:30 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.; former pastors and representatives speaking; Reed Brothers

and Joyful Noise, music; dinner on the grounds.

► **Liberty Church, Kemper County:** Homecoming, Aug. 12, 11 a.m., followed by lunch; Malcolm Lewis, speaker; revival, Aug. 13-15, 7 p.m.; Ralph Henson, speaker; Carolyn Starnes, music.

► **Cedar Grove Church, Lena:** Revival, Aug. 12-15; Sun., 11 a.m. and 5 p.m.; Mon.-Wed., 7 p.m.; Bill Sturm, speaker.

► **Glade Church, Laurel:** Revival, Aug. 12-15; Sun., 10:30 a.m. and 6 p.m.; Mon.-Wed., 7 p.m.; Carroll Roberson, speaker and music.

► **Cedar View Church, Olive Branch:** Homecoming, Aug. 12; Bible study, 9:15 a.m.; worship, 10:30 a.m., followed by potluck lunch and afternoon singing; Ty Huitt, speaker; Bluff City Quartet, music.

► **Liberty Church, Liberty:** Revival, Aug. 12-15; Sun., 11 a.m. and 6 p.m.; Mon.-Wed., noon and 7 p.m.; Stan Weatherford,

speaker; David LeCompte, music.

► **New Home Church, Bay Springs:** Homecoming and cemetery fundraiser, Aug. 12; worship, 11 a.m., followed by fellowship meal; Representative Blaine "Bo" Eaton, speaker; Tim Robertson, music.

► **Lantrip Church, Bruce:** Revival, Aug. 12-15, 7 p.m.; Benny Hill, Danny Kelly, Darrell Logan and Thad, and Will Turner, speakers; Bobby Sexton, music; Deanna Wooten, pianist; Robert Earl Alexander, pastor.

► **Fellowship Church, Ripley:** Revival, Aug. 12-15; Sun., 11 a.m. and 6 p.m.; Mon.-Wed., 7 p.m.; Michael Baker, Jonathan Baker, Stanley Huddleston, Randy Smith, and Randy Hamilton, speakers; Billy W. Baker, pastor.

► **Terry's Creek Church, Magnolia:** Revival, 7 p.m. nightly, Aug. 13, Van Windham, speaker; Wayne Hedgepeth, music; Aug. 20, David Fortenberry, speaker; Todd McDaniel, music; Aug. 27, Gene Douglas, speaker; Glen & Brenda Roberts, music.

APOLOGY

cont. from p. 1

family, and our community for the actions and attitudes that have recently occurred."

The multiple channel, 24-hour news cycle helped to spread the controversy well beyond Crystal Springs, a small city in Copiah County in west central Mississippi. Reporters from as far away as China, France, England, and Canada inundated telephone lines with requests for interviews. News crews from most of the major American television networks wanted to produce live satellite reports from Mississippi. Social media also lit up with demands that the situation be addressed and resolved.

A unity rally not connected with the church was held in a Crystal Springs public park to express confidence that racial progress has been made in the city, and to make a commitment that the city will continue to move forward in the future. Weatherford spoke at the rally, as did the Crystal Springs mayor and other local dignitaries.

Jim Futral, executive director of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board, said in a July 30 statement that he believed the good people of the church would take on the task of resolving the issue. First Church, Crystal Springs, like all cooperating churches of the

Mississippi Baptist Convention, is an autonomous church responsible for making its own decisions.

"Our entire country, and especially here in Mississippi, has been on a long journey for right racial relationships. Mississippi Baptists both reject racial discrimination and at the same time respect the autonomy of our local churches to deal with difficulties and disagreements under the Lordship of Jesus.

"While there may be hurts, wrongs, and mistakes that must be addressed, the context for this to happen is in a historical church with a genuine caring pastor and thoughtful leaders who are seeking to do right. We along with our entire body of faith pray for them and stand ready to do anything that we can to help that church and that community."

Rogers S. "Sing" Oldham, vice president for convention communications and relations for the Executive Committee of the Southern Baptist Convention in Nashville, issued a statement that read in part, "We trust and pray the church will continue to deal with this in a way that restores its Gospel witness within its own community and brings honor to our Lord."

The August 5 statement released by the church, unedited and verbatim, follows:

"We, the members of the body of Christ known as the First Baptist Church Crystal Springs, do this day affirm our unchanging belief that Jesus Christ is Lord of the church. Our church is indeed His church. We recognize that He, the Savior, died for all people. Our desire is that our church be open to all who desire to come and know him, meet with him, and grow with others who seek to follow Him. We also recognize that our church, like any other church, is made up of sinful, redeemed, but flawed saints who intentionally, at times, choose not to follow the Lord's will.

"In recent days, the focus of the world's attention has been on Crystal Springs and First Baptist Church. We, the church, realize that the Hendersons and Wilsons should have never been asked to relocate their wedding. This wrong decision resulted in hurt and sadness for everyone. Both the pastor and those involved in the wedding location being changed have expressed their regrets and sorrow for their actions.

"As a church, we express our apology to Te'Andrea and Charles Wilson for the hurt that was brought to them in the hours preceding their wedding and beyond. We are seeking forgiveness and reconciliation with our Lord Jesus Christ, Te'Andrea and Charles, family and friends of the Hendersons and Wilsons, our church family, and our community for the actions and attitudes that have recently occurred.

"We, the membership of First Baptist Church Crystal Springs, hold the position that we should be open to all people. Our desire is to restore the church to be a spiritual lighthouse in doing the Lord's will in Crystal Springs and in Mississippi. In Galatians 6:1-2, Paul tells the people in the church, 'Dear brothers and sisters, if another believer is overcome by some sin, you who are godly should gently and humbly help that person back onto the right path. And be careful not to fall into the same temptation yourself. Share each other's burdens, and in this way obey the law of Christ.' In these verses we find the Spirit of God at work in us this day. We open our hearts to all

people and reach out to a world in need of Christ and welcome them to our church and ministries.

"We encourage our pastor and staff, leaders and members to help one another, bear one another's burdens, and to forgive one another for our faults and failures. We are determined to lift one another up so that the hurts of yesterday will not prevent the blessings and victories of tomorrow. We commit to pray for one another, love one another, and work to enable our church to be everything Christ would have it to be and to reflect his love and grace in every way, in every service, and to everyone.

To God be the Glory."

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The Domino Effect • Judges 17:1-8, 12-13; 18:30-31

Since July 8, we have been examining characters from the book of Judges as we explored the theme of how to demonstrate fidelity to the Lord during crises. This week's lesson encourages us to live consistently by godly standards. One way we can do that is to be aware of sin's multiplying effects and deliberately choose to take the moral high-road.

1. Disintegration of a Family (Judg. 17:1-6)

The latter part of the book of Judges has a recurrent theme appearing first in 17:6. The theme, "In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as they saw fit," points toward a growing antinomianism and relative morality (see also 18:1; 19:1; 21:25). In this regard, Ancient Israel and Modern America look like twin sisters!

The first part of our story focuses upon Micah, a man who stole silver from his mother. When he confessed and gave it back, she took a portion of the silver to make an idol. In turn, Micah followed his mother's sinful lead and made other "household gods" and a shrine to worship them. He even made one of his sons a family priest (17:5).

In this one episode we see the breaking of many commandments: stealing, dishonoring parents, lying, and idolatry. Note especially how Micah's mother invoked the

name of the Lord and then commissioned the making of a silver image. Instead of demonstrating fidelity to the Lord, "everyone did as they saw fit!"

2. Corruption of a High Calling (Judg. 17:7-8, 12-13)

The second part of our story focuses upon a homeless young Levite from Bethlehem "in search of some other place to stay" (17:7-8a). He happened upon Micah's house (17:8b). Micah offered the young Levite shelter, money, clothes, and food, in exchange for being his personal priest (17:9-11). Contrary to all divine legislation regarding the role and ministry of the Levites, Micah "installed the Levite" and the young man became "his priest and lived in his house" (17:12).

Micah's mother had invoked the name of the Lord just before she commissioned the making of an idol (17:3). Micah followed her corrupt lead in invoking the name of the Lord immediately after illegally installing a Levite as his private priest (17:13).

Micah, corrupted by disintegrating family life, had extended the corruption to a young, undiscerning Levite. The Levite abandoned his high calling to serve the Lord for the benefit of the whole nation. Instead, he opted to be a household priest, idols and all, to a sinful man for room and board. Instead of demonstrating fidelity to the Lord, "everyone did as they saw fit!"

3. Degeneration of an Entire Society (Judg. 18:30-31)

The final part of our story broadens out to include the tribe of Dan, who like the young Levite earlier was seeking a place to live (18:1). The tribe had been allotted land along the Mediterranean coast, but settling there proved impossible due to the constant menace of the Philistines. The refrain, "In those days Israel had no king," introduces the episode and foreshadows further lawlessness.

The Danites settled in the region north of the Sea of Galilee known as Laish. They conquered the peaceful people of the region and took the land for their own. Along the

way the Danites had come upon Micah's house. They took his idol and his priest with them. They settled in Laish, renamed Dan, after their ancestor. There, "they set up for themselves the idol" (18:30).

What started as a mother's idolatry had corrupted a son, a grandson, a young Levite, and eventually the entire tribe of Dan. Additionally, the young Levite is identified as Moses' grandson, Jonathan son of Gershom. His sinful indiscretion resulted in his sons being priests for the tribe of Dan. Even worse, the degeneration was not confined to one time; it extended "until the time of the captivity of the land," a reference to the Assyrian deportation of Dan in 734 B.C., several centuries later (2 Kings 15:29). Instead of demonstrating fidelity to the Lord, "everyone did as they saw fit!"

What about us? We need to realize that our sinful behavior can be influential in corrupting an entire society over a span of generations. A more noble life goal than doing as we see fit, would be to live consistently by godly standards. We can avoid "the domino effect" of sin by giving each day to the Lord. Let's demonstrate fidelity to the Lord today.

VanHorn is dean of Christian Studies at Mississippi College, Clinton.

Let Your Heart Be Broken • Jeremiah 8:4-13, 18—9:1

Using as a model the life and ministry of the prophet Jeremiah, our lesson unit for August describes the qualities of the person God uses to accomplish His purposes. Last week, we explored the desired, optimum response to the call of God. The person God uses will make no excuses that would limit the power of God to work in and through them. Next week's discussion will challenge servants to rise above the certain, ever-present discouragement that would seek to derail the plan of God. The final lesson of the month will highlight the complete necessity of living a life of faithful obedience. This week's study will display the beauty of the sincerity of a broken heart for the things that grieve The Master. True servants of God walk with wounded hearts that are crushed and pierced by the same things that bring sorrow to Him.

My pastor in New Orleans for nearly twenty years was named Ken Taylor. His string of academic degrees and educational accomplishments could have filled your bowl of alphabet soup to overflowing. Two doctoral degrees deserve the title and acknowledgement. Since 1985, every kid on the streets of the Gentilly area of the city has known him simply as Brother Ken. Once at a block party, I noticed his stick-on

paper name tag. With a black sharpie he had written "Bro. Ken." I told him that very day that finally I understood why his ministry was so effective in the inner city. He was willing to be "BroKen" for Jesus' sake. May his tribe increase and may the Lord grant me a teepee next door to his in the village.

Jeremiah understood what it meant to be broken and crushed. He was familiar with the bitter taste of salty tears. He knew what it was like to have the assignment of standing in the gates of the temple in Jerusalem and calling the roll of the unfaithful as they marched through with pomp and circumstance in their Sabbath-Go-To-Meeting clothes. He would hear His Lord tell him not to bother praying for these people, they were too far gone to care. God cared for them, but they did not seem to care about God.

These were not people who did not know God. These were people who knew God and who knew better. Even the creatures of the

air instinctively know the migration times and routes but these people gave God no allegiance. They gave the phrase "bird brain" a new meaning. They turned away and refused to repent. They held fast to deceit. They excelled at falsehood. They rejected the word of the Lord. They were greedy for gain. Their worship leaders calmed

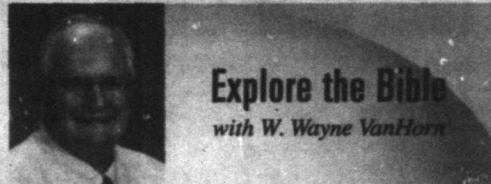
the people with pleasing messages of peace while storm clouds were rolling in from all directions. Shame was no longer a word in their vocabulary. They had forgotten how to blush. They had become completely desensitized to the dangers of sin.

Jeremiah might have been described as "all cried out and no place to go." The biblical portrait of his life and ministry is shaded, matted and framed with deep, abiding grief. He is known as the prophet of tears. His beloved Judah was headed over a spiritual, moral and social cliff that was littered with warning signs, brakes off, pedal to the

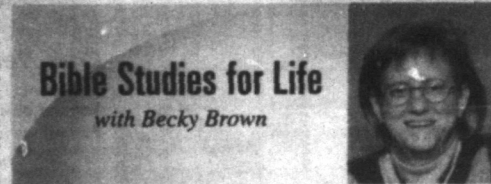
metal. Exile in Babylon would follow the soon-coming destruction of Jerusalem. The New Testament records the fact that Jesus wept. Both times, He wept because of the unbelief of people who should have known better. Jeremiah was in good company. God's Old Testament heart was broken too. Both testaments follow the trail of tears.

Scripture admonishes us to care and to share and to bear the burdens of others. We are to rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep. However, there is a huge difference in weeping WITH others and weeping FOR others. Weeping with others implies mutual concern that grows out of shared fellowship. Weeping for others implies deep separation that results from ignorance or estrangement or outright rejection. Until we get to the point where concern for others breaks our heart, I wonder if we can truly be used by God at all. Concern for people who have never heard the gospel. Concern for people who have heard the gospel and said no thank you. Concern for people who claim the name of Christ but bear no family resemblance to the Father.

Brown is the staff evangelist at First Church, Richland.



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CALVARY BAPTIST CHURCH IN OAK GROVE IS SEEKING A PART-TIME CHILDREN'S MINISTER. We will be taking resumes now-August 10. Send resumes to calvarychildrensearch@yahoo.com.

Just for the Record



Steven Jackson, chief of police of DeKalb who also serves in the Mississippi National Guard of the HQS Army Liaison Team of Greenville, presented **DEKALB CHURCH** with a flag flown at Combat Outpost Tillman in the Pakitika Province of eastern Afghanistan July 1. Shown are pastor James Ruffin and Jackson.



More than 50 children participated in Armor Up Sports Camp at **NESHOBA COUNTY ASSOCIATION** in July, focusing on a different sport each week. Jason Willis and Rusty Parsons, leaders.



NEW HOPE CHURCH, FOXWORTH, ordained Ryan Stringer as deacon July 29, 6:30 p.m. Shown are pastor Tim Parker, Stringer, Tommy King, and Donald Lowery.

HOMEWOOD CHURCH, SCOTT COUNTY, recognized high school graduates Brady Warren, Jacob Shirley, pastor Doyle Boyles, Kristen Miley, and Colton Lewis.



In other Church News:

➤ **Crossgates Church, Brandon**, is hosting the Love Worth Fighting For conference Aug. 18, 6 p.m. Kirk Cameron, star of Fireproof, featured speaker; Warren Barfield, music. Tickets range from \$20 - 35; for more information, or to order tickets, visit www.feedyourfaith.com.

➤ **First Baptist, Tremont**, is hosting a back to school rally Aug. 11, 7:30 - 9:30 p.m., featuring Jeremy Allison and New Dimension of Worship.

➤ Columbia native Philip Fortenberry will give a solo piano performance at **First Church, Columbia** Aug. 19, 6 p.m.

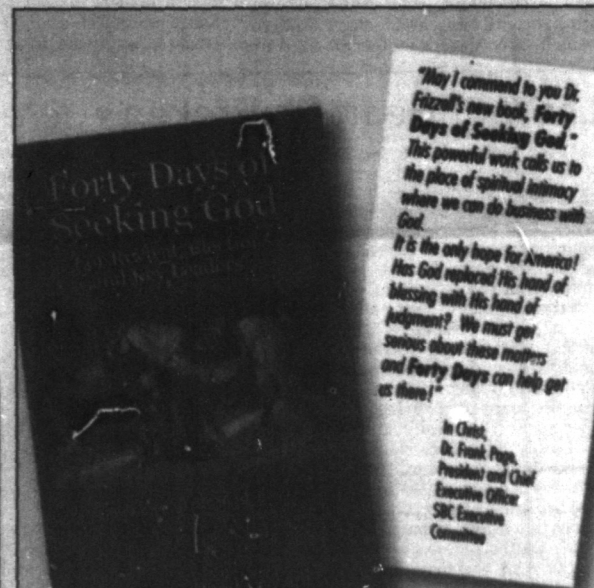
➤ **Pelahatchie Church, Pelahatchie**, will host the Perrys in concert Aug. 16, 7 p.m. Love offering.

➤ Twenty-plus youth from **Journey Church, Olive Branch**, led by youth director Michael Cooper attended the AreaOne Camp in Sandestin, Fla., the last week in June.

HOPE CHURCH, NESHOBA ASSOCIATION, recognized custodians Adell and Norma McNair for 40 years of service to the church with a reception and recognition service. Shown are the McNairs and pastor Dennis Duval.



GRACE FELLOWSHIP CHURCH, LEXINGTON, hosted guest speaker B. Samuel Sajan Kumar, pastor, South Lallaguda Church, Hyderabad-Secunderabad, India, July 29. Shown are Francis Daniel, Ruth Daniel, Abi Daniel, Kumar, and pastor Jack Manor.



"May I commend to you Dr. Fitzell's new book, Forty Days of Seeking God. This powerful work calls us to the place of spiritual intimacy where we can do business with God. It is the only hope for America! Has God explored His hand of blessing with His hand of judgment? We must get serious about these matters and Forty Days can help get us there!"

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For book or conference information with Dr. Fitzell, contact our office at: info@40days.org or 405-942-3000, x4517.

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